

### ***Carnahan visits troops in Iraq***

By: Joe Harris  
Of the Suburban Journals

Hope and optimism best describe the feelings U. S. Rep. Russ Carnahan, D-St. Louis, has after a recent visit with troops and officials in Iraq.

Carnahan returned last week from the four-day trip that included visits with local troops and newly elected Iraqi leaders. Carnahan visited an Iraqi troop and police officer training facility in Jordan; the towns of Baghdad, Fallujah and Tikrit; and a U.S. Army hospital in Germany.

"The highlight was visiting with the troops on the ground," Carnahan said. "They even arranged for us to meet with troops from our own state."

Lance Cpl. Benjamin Harris, Imperial, was one of the Missouri soldiers Carnahan met. Carnahan brought the soldiers phone cards so they could call their loved ones back home.

Troops made Carnahan a Missouri state flag. Aside from the phone cards, other representatives gave troops homemade cards from elementary school children and autographed footballs.

"The thing I took away from meeting with the troops was the incredible respect I have for the troops on the ground with the dangerous work they are doing and the difference they are making," Carnahan said.

That difference was apparent during the Iraqi elections, when Iraqi troops and police officers stood side by side with American troops at polling places. Carnahan believes such efforts show the Iraqis are taking steps to ensure their own security.

"There are some really aggressive efforts to train the Iraqi troops and police quickly," Carnahan said. "The goal is to train 35,000 Iraqi police by the end of the year."

Carnahan hopes the training of so many Iraqi police officers will help the American troops return home more quickly.

The trained Iraqi troops are showing tremendous resolve and courage. Carnahan was told the story of an Iraqi soldier who stopped a suicide bomber by sacrificing his own life during the elections.

The soldier sighted the bomber, grabbed him and held him away from the crowd until the bomb went off. The blast killed the bomber and the soldier. Afterward, the crowd spat on the body of the bomber while keeping their place in line to vote. The soldier has become a national hero.

Carnahan is happy to see needed body armor finally made it to the troops. There was criticism in the war's early stages that not all troops were supplied with body armor. Carnahan made it a campaign promise to get all needed equipment, including body armor, to troops.

"We also heard from a doctor in our military hospital (in Germany) that the body armor has made a big difference in the number of injuries and fatalities they are seeing," Carnahan said.

Carnahan said the Iraqi people'